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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Sixth session

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 9 December 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALSTON

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General discussion on the topic of social and economic indicators

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS (agenda item 8)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the discussion on economic and social indicators was being held in response to a number of concerns. Firstly, the Committee was anxious to obtain technical advice on how it could utilize economic and social indicators in its work. Secondly, it wanted to know what approaches were being followed by other bodies, whether within the United Nations system or outside it. Lastly, the Committee was particularly concerned to increase the effectiveness of its methods of work.

2. The Committee's position, at the current stage in international relations, was curious to say the least. In fact, subjects such as poverty or the need to guarantee at least a minimum of economic and social rights had not aroused much interest during the 1980s, despite all the speeches made at the United Nations. More importance had been attributed to the concepts of free trade and free enterprise than to the concept of the realization of economic and social rights, the argument being that if priority was given to the liberalization of the economy, the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights would necessarily follow. Such an argument was no more valid in the 1990s than it had been in the 1960s and 1970s, when the theory of the "trickle-down effect" in development matters had prevailed. Today, a number of United Nations agencies were, in a sense, rediscovering poverty and its importance: that was sufficiently clear from a comparison between the World Bank's current reports and those of the 1980s. Similarly, the term "human rights" was nowhere to be found in the documentation of the United Nations Development Programme of the period. At that time, the IMF had used the term only in a pejorative sense, implying that it had no interest in it. Those agencies now realized that there could be no sustained economic development without respect for human rights.

3. Ideally, the purpose of the discussion was to enable other United Nations agencies to find out about the Committee's work. In fact, that work was still little known and marginal in comparison with what was regarded as newsworthy in the rest of the United Nations system. Other agencies were as much to blame as the Committee itself for that situation. For that reason, the Committee would have to make its work better adapted to meet the concerns of other bodies, and at the same time keep itself better informed of the work they were doing. In a sense, therefore, the Committee was still looking for appropriate methods of work.

4. Two points needed to be made about the Committee's precise role. First, the Committee's mandate did not extend to economic or social development; as a result, its role was not to engage in general discussions with States parties. The Committee had been set up under a certain international treaty, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which more than 100 States had acceded, and its primary duty was to ensure strict compliance with the Covenant. He therefore hoped that speakers would refer specifically to the provisions of the Covenant. Whereas UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank might change their objectives every year and reformulate them at every meeting, the Committee had no such option: it was required, under

that same Covenant, to ensure that States parties continued to apply the principles it contained on a permanent basis, and honoured the obligations they had assumed in acceding to it. Specifically, the Committee could ask States to engage in a dialogue with it, and could ask them for a detailed report on how they were fulfilling their obligations. Accordingly, the objections that were sometimes raised when the IMF or the World Bank asked their member States to pay more regard to human rights could not be made against the Committee, which based its work on obligations clearly stated in the Covenant, obligations which States parties had freely accepted.

5. One of the methods already employed by the Committee was to adopt comments of general nature which were intended to make clear what interpretation it put on the Covenant and on its own work. General comment No. 1 on "Reporting by States parties" (E/1989/22) listed seven objectives for such reports. According to the second objective, the Committee's task was to ensure "that the State party monitors the actual situation with respect to each of the rights on a regular basis, and is thus aware of the extent to which the various rights are, or are not being enjoyed by all individuals within its territory or under its jurisdiction". However, the same text pointed out that "aggregate national statistics or estimates" were not always helpful in assessing the extent to which a State party had complied with its obligations. In fact, although it might seem unrealistic, the Covenant was applicable to each and every individual; its purpose was not to encourage States to increase their GNP or to improve their global health indicators, but to ensure that every individual in a particular State enjoyed a minimum standard of living. The Committee's task was thus to ensure that States parties themselves monitored implementation of the Covenant, to establish how far they were doing so effectively, and to what extent their efforts in that area could be deemed satisfactory.

6. He announced that in the absence of Mr. Danilo Türk, Mr. Türk's colleague, Mr. Scott Leckie, would introduce the work of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on economic rights, and in particular on the question of indicators.

7. Mr. LECKIE (Habitat International Coalition) said he would endeavour to show how useful economic and social indicators could be in evaluating implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. His arguments would be based on the work done on the question by Mr. Danilo Türk, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/WP.3, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/17 and E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/19).

8. The use of appropriate and carefully tested indicators could certainly contribute to a better assessment of how human rights were guaranteed - or denied - in a given State, as well as progress achieved over time in the progressive realization of those rights. However, certain problems remained, due to the fact that the indicators themselves were still far from perfect.

9. First, there was a danger that the Committee might encounter such obstacles as a lack of consistency in the application of indicators, a shortage of data, or at least of reliable data, or sources of information that were incomplete or out of date. In fact, indicators used to assess the

realization of human rights should meet a series of basic requirements: validity, objectivity, sensitivity, comparability, availability of data, accuracy and disaggregation. It was not surprising that UNDP, in designing its composite Human Development Index, should have confined itself to using current indicators that were relatively reliable, and had not been able to make use of other indicators that were equally valid for measuring progress achieved in the realization of many of the standards defined in the Covenant.

10. The second point to stress was that it was seldom possible to find indicators disaggregated by region, sex or race, which would make it possible to determine whether or not a State was complying with the obligations of non-discrimination laid down in the Covenant. The Committee should encourage countries and international agencies to formulate disaggregated indicators, which would enable Governments to detect any disparities more effectively, and consequently to introduce legislation and policies to remedy them. The difficulty was all the greater since Governments and international organizations were reluctant to collect certain statistics, for instance, on the homeless, which would be useful in regard to certain rights guaranteed under the Covenant, but which might put Governments in an awkward position.

11. Hence the need to stress that a third pitfall also had to be avoided: the manipulation of indicators for political purposes by Governments, some of which were already reluctant to admit to the Committee that they were having difficulties, and which would go so far as to falsify or at least make selective use of their indicators, as had already become established practice for some Governments, since human rights monitoring bodies were placing increasing reliance on such indicators. That was a further indication of the need to ensure that indicators were collected and published in an independent manner, something that was fairly unusual at the present time.

12. It would also be difficult, when handling indicators, to apply a fairly uniform legal approach, since it could never be sufficiently emphasized that indicators merely showed trends, and did not necessarily constitute facts, or, consequently, proofs.

13. Despite those risks, he considered that the Committee could and should use indicators as one method among others of monitoring implementation of the Covenant, and the modalities of such use could be the following: first, the Committee should carry out a "right by right" investigation in order to determine what kind of indicators would be relevant for each of the rights defined under articles 6 to 15, which were the reliable indicators already available on a worldwide basis, and how many new ones would have to be designed.

14. Secondly, the Committee would need to ask itself whether it would be able to complete its task in the knowledge that whereas indicators had no universal validity, all States parties had the same legal obligations. The Committee would also have to face up to the problem of the contrast between economic indicators, which were collected frequently and accurately, and indicators relating to human development and to the rights guaranteed under the Covenant, which were collected only very infrequently.

15. Thirdly, if the Committee was to request more indicators, in its guidelines on the preparation of reports, each State would be obliged - morally at least - to supply its own figures, which could thus be compared with the indicators published by international institutions. In so doing, the Committee would be encouraging States parties to admit that, in the absence of reliable and appropriate indicators, it was impossible to develop policies or legislation to guarantee the realization of rights guaranteed under the Covenant for all.

16. Fourthly, if the Committee wished to use indicators on a valid and systematic basis, it would have to keep in closer contact with agencies such as the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and UNDP, so that it could be kept informed of progress in indicator technology.

17. Lastly, the Committee, or at least some of its members, should play a key role in the organization of the expert seminar on economic and social indicators and their use in monitoring the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, which would probably be held at the end of 1992 or in 1993.

18. Mr. SIMMA said that although Mr. Leckie's statement had been very instructive, for the purposes of its discussion, the Committee should take more account of the reports (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/19 and E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/17) prepared by Mr. Danilo Türk, the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, and particularly his recommendations to the Sub-Commission and to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

19. The CHAIRMAN said the reports in question contained a general outline of work already carried out on economic and social indicators, and the difficulties involved in compiling such indicators. The second of the reports contained recommendations (paras. 44-48) which were also very general in character. The two reports had been useful chiefly in helping to increase awareness of the need for further thought in that area.

20. Mr. WESTENDORFF (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) said the Institute had been set up in 1963 to study the relationship between social progress and economic progress, and to endeavour to counterbalance the excessive importance attributed to economic indicators in development. Its role was to investigate what indicators such as, for instance, increase in per capita GNP meant in practice for the populations of the countries concerned. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and in the early 1980s, the Institute had collected data from a number of developing countries and United Nations agencies, and had worked on about 100 social indicators with a view to identifying those capable of assessing realization of the economic, social and cultural rights defined in the Covenant. More recently, the World Bank and UNDP had embarked on similar studies, and the World Health Organization too had for some time been working along similar lines. As a result, an enormous amount of information was now available, and the chief problem - in addition to the difficulties inherent in the actual data pointed out by Mr. Leckie - was to reconcile the different types of data deriving from different countries and institutions.

21. The CHAIRMAN said he realized it was possible to criticize any social indicator, and to point out that United Nations agencies themselves disagreed on what approach to adopt in regard to social indicators. Nevertheless, the Committee need not give up what could prove to be a useful exercise, by following the approach already adopted by UNDP. The Committee would thus have to decide how it would take into account the disadvantages inherent in the use of statistical indicators, and identify, at least in part, the basis on which it would be able to progress with the task of assessment.

22. Mr. SCHULENBURG (United Nations Development Programme) said that during the 1980s the ideological confrontation between East and West had compelled the funding institutions, at least until recently, to take account solely of the purely economic aspects of development. As of now, social development too could be taken into consideration, not only by research bodies but also by operational agencies of the United Nations system.

23. UNDP's approach to development could be summed up in the answers to two questions. First, what should be at the centre of development or, in operational terms, what should be the priorities of development? UNDP's answer was: human development. Accordingly, it had developed a composite Human Development Index, based essentially on three types of data relating to education, life expectancy and household income. Next - and more importantly - how was that indicator applied? It was applied, in particular, in the analysis of public spending. Thus, UNDP had studied eight budgets in order to find out what proportion of expenditure was devoted to human development. That analysis had sparked off all the current debates on the volume of military expenditure. UNDP's position on the substantive issue was very clear: it was opposed to any link being made between levels of aid, on the one hand, and the priority accorded by countries in their budgets to expenditure on human development on the other. As UNDP saw it, the Human Development Index only reflected statistical data, and should not be used as a basis for discussions with countries; it should not let itself be seen as a tool which the North could use to dominate the South. The same could be said of the human freedom index, as well as of other indicators relating to such questions as sexual equality and income distribution. The indicators developed by UNDP had, in general, been well received by its Governing Council, but since UNDP was an operational agency, what was most important was the practical impact of their use in the countries themselves.

24. Mr. NENEMAN said he was pleased to note the increased interest shown by the World Bank and UNDP in human rights, notably in economic, social and cultural rights, but pointed out that that interest was purely theoretical. In practice, aid was often granted on condition that the State concerned reduced its public spending, and it was most often health and education services that bore the brunt of that "conditionality". The Committee's primary task should be to ensure the practical realization of the rights set forth in the Covenant.

25. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the United Nations system as a whole - like the principal donor countries - devoted little more than 8 per cent of all the aid it granted to expenditure on "human development priorities" which the Committee would describe as the "realization of economic, social and cultural rights". There was not much difference between the two expressions.

26. Mr. SIMMA said that on the contrary, it was not immaterial whether certain aspects of development were discussed in economic language or in legal language. In fact, from a legal point of view, every right implied a corresponding obligation. Thus, if the economic, social and cultural rights of individuals in a certain country were not realized, the State was defaulting on an obligation it had contracted under the Covenant. It was true that informing a sovereign State that it was failing in an obligation towards its own nationals was far from easy. Nevertheless, that was in fact what the Committee did: the expression "constructive dialogue" with States was merely a euphemism. Such an approach was very different from that taken by all the specialized agencies represented at the current meeting.

27. In the final analysis, the problem at issue was basically a philosophical one: were not the "human rights" approach and the "social indicators" approach incompatible? If human rights were the rights exercised by every individual in a society, whereas social indicators by definition only reflected averages, how was it possible for realization of the former to be assessed in terms of the latter? As he saw it, the greater the importance attached to social indicators, the greater the credence given to the opinion - in his view a "Western" opinion - that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was fundamentally different from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Since the former was related to development, States would simply be expected to do their best, and to submit to the Committee aggregate reports with virtually no analysis of individual elements; what the Committee wanted was rather to emphasize how economic, social and cultural rights on the one hand and civil and political rights on the other were interdependent and equal in status.

28. Again, if all human rights were interdependent, how could indicators be of any use in monitoring the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, but be of no use in monitoring realization of civil and political rights?

29. In his report, Mr. Danilo Türk had defined criteria on which any consideration of indicators in a human rights context should be based (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/WP.3, para. 7); he would like to know whether those criteria were acceptable to the specialists.

30. Referring to general comment No. 3 (1990) which the Committee had adopted at its fifth session on the nature of States parties' obligations (E/1991/23, annex III), he asked what would happen should a State which, prima facie, had failed to discharge a minimum core obligation (para. 10) invoke justifications of a legal nature, such as for instance force majeure (shortfall in agricultural output, financial crisis). In such a case, would social indicators be sufficient to counter legal arguments? Or, on the contrary, would it still be necessary to give careful consideration to each specific case, in order to determine whether the limitation of the right under consideration was justified, or whether there had been a failure to discharge a minimum core obligation? What would be the use of social indicators in such a situation?

31. Mr. SWEPSTON (International Labour Organisation) said that the ILO, like the Committee, was endeavouring to ascertain to what extent States were discharging the obligations which they had contracted on ratifying a convention. The ILO did not have a set of social or development indicators in its possession, but it had gathered a considerable amount of objective information, notably statistics on employment, unemployment, salaries, court decisions, etc., from reports submitted by States. The ILO kept the Committee regularly informed of any problems encountered in the implementation of conventions relating to articles 6 to 10 of the Covenant. It was possible that members of the Committee might not be receiving all the information they needed, but that was a problem of communications between the Committee and the ILO.

32. For its part, the ILO had never considered it necessary to establish criteria for ascertaining whether or not a State was violating the provisions of a convention, and it determined whether a State was discharging its obligations on the basis of facts and figures. In fact, it rarely found that a State was flagrantly violating the provisions of a convention which it had ratified. Furthermore, the preparation of indicators by experts in law or the social sciences was an exceedingly complex undertaking. For all those reasons, the ILO had some reservations about the creation of indicators designed to assess how a convention was being implemented.

33. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that human rights were in the forefront of world attention at the moment only because public opinion had been made aware of them. Certain non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International, had played a very important role in that regard. They had often been criticized for asking unduly simplistic questions concerning, for instance, numbers of political prisoners or numbers of executions, instead of asking to what extent freedom was respected, but Amnesty International had nevertheless succeeded in showing that certain practices were unacceptable. The Committee ought not to be satisfied with a general approach such as that followed by the ILO, which confined itself to considering reports and requesting additional information. Today, it was possible to go further, to reach conclusions that were more specific and subtle, and also to alert public opinion to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

34. Mr. SWEPSTON (International Labour Organisation) endorsed the comments made by the Chairman, but pointed out that there were various possible approaches, and that the ILO had been known to find that violations had been committed. The work of bodies such as Amnesty International or the International Commission of Jurists was no doubt highly useful, but in his view it did not necessarily follow that the progressive approach should be abandoned.

35. Mr. KUNNEMANN (Food First Information and Action Network) said the organization he represented was concerned with the right to food. Where human rights in general were concerned, he pointed out that what individuals wanted to know was what obligations their Government had assumed in that area, and hence what they themselves were entitled to demand. The question of indicators should be considered in that context.

36. He could not approve the definition of development given by UNDP, which in his view was too vague and lacking in substance. In addition, the definition did not take into consideration ecology, which was an important aspect of development. As to development indicators as such, there was need to define not one, but several indicators, relating to the environment and to the various human rights. Human rights should not be confused with development: rather, the role of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights in development needed to be established. As he saw it, development had three objectives: a healthy environment, the implementation of human rights, and the eradication of poverty. Accordingly, criteria should be developed which could serve as a basis for assessing progress achieved in each one of those areas. Where human rights in particular were concerned, he proposed that any assessments of implementation of both economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights by means of indicators should be made from the viewpoint of the obligations of States parties. Hitherto, agencies had used indicators to describe a situation, and had then to establish a link between the question of human rights and the obligations of States in that connection.

37. As he saw it, there were three different kinds of obligation where human rights were concerned: the obligation to respect, the obligation to protect, and the obligation to fulfil a duty. The nature of those obligations varied with the different rights under consideration. For instance, the obligation to respect civil and political rights meant that the State must limit its interventions, whereas the obligation to protect meant that it must prevent third parties from intervening. It was difficult to ascertain whether a State was fulfilling its duties properly, since that would involve an assessment of the policy of the Government. He proposed that the same approach should be adopted for economic, social and cultural rights on the one hand, and civil and political rights on the other. It would consist in defining the obligations of States and determining a percentage of GNP - for instance - 5 per cent - to be devoted to the promotion of human rights. It would thus be easier to establish whether or not a State was fulfilling its obligations.

38. Mr. KONATE had some doubts as to the usefulness of indicators in assessing implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. First, the position of human rights in relation to development should be defined. For UNDP, for instance, respect for human rights was the result of development; for the Committee, it should be a prerequisite of development. He thus had some reservations on the use of indicators, because although they could describe a specific situation, they could not determine whether a State was complying with its obligations. Sweden was a case in point: that country devoted only 2 per cent of its budget to education, but had nevertheless achieved a great deal in that area, in conformity with the provisions of the Covenant. Indicators were thus inadequate in such a case because they could not be used to assess implementation of the Covenant. Moreover, the "indicator" approach did not take into account the priorities selected by States. In order to overcome that difficulty, criteria should be defined for each State in relation to its own economic, social and cultural situation, and that State should be judged on the results of the measures taken in the

priority areas it had itself selected. He warned the Committee against the tendency - in his view, a dangerous tendency - to determine budget percentages that should be allocated to areas it regarded as priority areas, as did certain funding institutions.

39. Mr. SPARSIS pointed out that the discussion was unlikely to be of any immediate relevance for the great majority of developing countries, which at present possessed neither their own social and economic indicators nor the human resources necessary to develop such indicators. The first step should therefore be to assist such countries to provide themselves with the means of assessing human development on a national scale.

40. In addition, it would seem justified that aid supplied by United Nations agencies to Governments at the request of the latter should be tied to certain conditions, since it was only to be expected that any request would give rise to obligations. It was all too easy to use the pretext of national sovereignty to allow economic and social injustices to be perpetuated, and United Nation agencies ought not to condone such an attitude by failing to impose conditions on countries which were recipients of their aid.

41. Monitoring bodies such as the Committee should be equally vigilant in regard to the developed countries, where much was said about privatization and the necessary "adaptability" of the labour market: if those two concepts were to be realized in the sense in which they were understood by employers, respect for economic, social and cultural rights would be greatly at risk, despite the optimism paraded by those same employers and by Governments. The collapse of European socialism in France and Germany and the rise of Thatcherism in the United Kingdom merely confirmed his misgivings in that regard.

42. The CHAIRMAN said that those ideas were interesting in the general context of the discussion, but pointed out that the Committee had to consider the usefulness of social and economic indicators. He gave the floor to the representative of the Overseas Development Institute, a specialist in property rights and agrarian reforms.

43. Mr. PLANT (Overseas Development Institute) explained the legal connotations of social or economic indicators applicable to the right to land, a right which, although not explicitly defined in the Covenant, was nevertheless implicit in paragraph 2 of article 11 of that instrument. The provisions in question laid particular stress on the efficiency of agrarian systems and equity in the distribution of food supplies: whereas the total area of agricultural land was not increasing, and it was important to make the best possible use of it, world food production could well increase, even if supplies were unfairly distributed. Thus, the Covenant did not lay down that equitable distribution of land was an absolute principle, unlike other instruments, such as the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, which referred to the social function of property, established equal access to property and rejected any form of land ownership which involved the exploitation of man.

44. Any indicator adopted by the Committee would have to take account of certain factors, the most important of which was the function fulfilled by land, a function which was different in developing countries - still basically agricultural - and industrialized countries. For the former, access to land was closely bound up with survival, whereas for the latter, that was not the case. It was also important to make a distinction between different kinds of right to land: those who owned land had a civil right to it; those who did not own land, but were nevertheless dependent on it and had no other means of subsistence, had a kind of social and economic right to it; and finally, indigenous, tribal or pastoral populations, who were unable to survive as a distinct cultural entity without continuing to cultivate the lands or forests which they had occupied from time immemorial, had a "cultural" right to it. The problem did not arise in the same form in the developed countries, which were concerned only with property established under civil law, and where the cultivation of agricultural land was no longer vital, to the extent that some farmers were even being encouraged to decrease their output. In most developing countries, on the other hand, legal ambiguities had to be reckoned with, since there was sometimes a conflict between civil law - which recognized the right of individuals to ownership - and the national constitution, the prevailing system of land tenure, or the agrarian law, which often recognized the social function of land, and limited the enjoyment of the right of ownership. Close attention should be paid to those who neither possessed nor had access to land: the critical increase in the numbers of landless over the past 10 or 20 years had been a decisive factor in the impoverishment of the countryside in all developing countries. The reallocation of land following the great agrarian reforms had undermined the food security of the former occupants, who were now deprived of any means of subsistence, while the abolition of quasi-futile systems of occupancy had led to large-scale migrations to the towns, and hence to a rise in urban unemployment. In addition, the majority of agricultural workers had only seasonal employment, and lived the rest of the year in precarious circumstances. Privatization, which met the interests of efficiency, could also cause unemployment, as was expected to occur in the countries of Eastern Europe and in Mexico.

45. In regard to the indicators which could be used to measure enjoyment of the right to land, the types of data proposed by UNDP in its Human Development Report - land area, proportion of arable land, livestock, etc. - would only be useful for the Committee if they were seen in relation to land ownership and land concentration, and to food availability and per capita food consumption, as well as to employment and to absence of any access to land. The Gini Index (land concentration) was not entirely valid, because some countries compiled it by taking an average of large and small agricultural holdings, while others took into consideration the number of "landless peasants", which indeed would seem an essential element. To sum up, there was need to compile a set of indicators which would reflect rights of ownership or occupancy, land distribution, the landless rural population, and food production, not forgetting the sometimes critical differences between regions in the same country.

46. Mr. SIMMA reverted to the idea that a comparative analysis of economic, social and cultural rights should be carried out with a view to determining the comparative usefulness of the relevant indicators. That was also one of the lessons to be learned from the reports submitted so far by States parties, and there was no doubt that that would be the right approach to follow in future in studying the question. One of the criteria could be how far the individual was free to choose to exercise various rights: for example, whether all were free to choose whether or not to join a trade union - what social or economic indicator could assess the extent to which such a right was enjoyed? On the other hand, no one could do without food or shelter: the ratio between number of dwellings and number of families was thus relevant, as was food availability in times of scarcity. But was apparent consumption of protein of animal origin per capita (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/19, para. 72) relevant, now that vegetarianism was in fashion?

47. Mr. WESTENDORFF (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) pointed out that that indicator could be adjusted by placing the emphasis more on calorie and vitamin intake. Perhaps the first concern should be whether essential needs were met.

48. He admitted it was somewhat contradictory to try to assess enjoyment of rights on the part of the individual by indicators designed to show an average. It was also true that indicators had a number of defects: lack of reliability, utilization of outdated or non-comparable estimates and data, etc. They nevertheless provided information on how far human rights were exercised and respected, and were also useful in increasing an awareness of human rights.

49. The CHAIRMAN invited members of the Committee to give some thought to the question of the extent to which they should use indicators in investigating how far States parties were implementing economic, social and cultural rights, and whether they should not link respect for those rights with respect for civil and political rights, with a view to determining how far the former were freely and democratically exercised. Clearly, it would be difficult to devise any indicators that would serve as a basis for measuring respect for civil and political rights.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.